**Mental hygiene** is a Science which deals with the process of attaining mental health and preserving mental health in the society. The term mental health is closely related with the term mental hygiene as the main objective of mental hygiene is to attain mental health. In other words, mental hygiene is a means of mental health. That is why we can say that mental hygiene is the means and mental health is the end.

**Definitions of Mental Hygiene**

1. American Psychiatric Association: “Mental hygiene consists of measures to reduce the incidence of mental illness through prevention and early treatment and to promote mental health”.
2. **Crow & Crow:** “Mental Hygiene is a science that deals with human welfare and pervades all fields of human relationship”.
3. Encyclopedia Britannia: “mental hygiene as the science of maintaining mental health and preventing the development of psychosis, neurosis, or other mental disorders”.
4. It is the science, which deal with

* The prevention of mental illness,
* The preservation of mental health, and
* The care of mental illness.

**Aims and Objectives**

1. Mental hygiene provides an opportunity to the individual to realize and develop his potentialities to the maximum.
2. Harmonious development of physical, mental and spiritual capacities of the individual.
3. To develop positive attitude towards life
4. It is responsible for effective existence
5. It is to prevent mental disorders or illness.
6. Preserve the mental health of the individual in group.
7. It is to discover and utilize therapeutic measure to cure mental illness.
8. Rehabilitation of mentally disturbed
9. To deal social problems

**Functions of Mental Hygiene**

Mental hygiene has four important functions. These are:

1. Prevention or preventive –The most important function of mental hygiene is to prevent mental health problems by developing some programmes
2. Creative – Another function of mental illness is to develop programme like counselling, psychotherapy to treat an individual or a group or to treat a mental patient.
3. Preservative- Not all people are mentally ill; rather of them possess sound mental health. So the third function is to develop programme through education for preserving mental health.
4. Training- Another function of mental hygiene is to train a set of personnel who can help the people with psychological problem by trying to understand their problems and then helping them to meet their needs.

**Principles of Mental Hygiene**

To formulate general principles of mental hygiene is a really difficult task as there is a wide range of differences among the individuals. Some of the reasons for this are:

1. Human beings have multiple needs which grow in the course of development. These needs are contradictory in nature.
2. There is no single, also absolute standard to judge human behaviour or action. However, in spite of these difficulties, we can formulate some general principles. These are
3. **Adjustment in home:** Every child should develop such type of behaviour at home so that he can adjust himself in any type of situation. Parents should take utmost care because the behaviour patterns that develop in early childhood leave permanent impression on the child. Parents should try to develop the desirable traits in their children and develop competence, security, adequacy, self esteem and discipline by catering to their basic needs.
4. **Adjustment in school:** After home, school plays an important role in the development of personality. The school through its various activities can go a long way in creating an environment for the children to preserve and develop their mental health.
5. **Adjustment to Society:** Man is a social animal and he has to adjust himself with the society. Without proper social interaction, harmonious development of personality cannot occur. Hence, parents, teacher and society must provide socially acceptable channels for the release of pent up emotional feeling so that the children and adolescents develop healthy personality.
6. **Adjustment to work-** According to Freud, one is mentally healthy, if one can work successfully. School through its programme, should develop the proper mental state towards work in child.

**Elements of Mental Hygiene:**

Generally mental hygiene has the following elements:

1. Physical health.
2. Intellectual health.
3. Emotional health.
4. Interest and aptitude.
5. Good environment.

Mental hygiene deals with these principles of living which would serve as a guide to human adjustments. It consists of those patterns of living which promote the development of wholesome and socially adequate personalities.

These patterns of living help an individual to get along with himself and with his fellowmen, to cultivate desirable attitudes, to avoid conflicts that bring about maladjustments, and to pursue intelligent, rational behaviour. These principles have been drawn from philosophy, psychology, religion, ethics, sociology, biology, physiology, medicine, psychiatry and common-tense.

**The three purposes of mental hygiene are:**

1. The prevention of mental disorders through an understanding of the relationship that exists between wholesome personality development and life experiences;
2. The preservation of the mental health of the individual and of the group, and
3. The discovery and utilisation of therapeutic measures to cure mental illness.

Of these three approaches, preventive, preservative and curative, the most significant and modern approach is the preventive approach. This approach is very much influenced by principles of public health. According to Kaplan and Baron, this approach ” is based on the principle that the best way to insure well-adjusted individuals is to surround them with environmental influences which will enable each person to develop his full potentialities, to attain emotional stability, and to achieve personal and social adequacy”. Preventive mental hygiene begins in the home, and its principles are important even in the school and other areas.

**Preventive Measures**

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| The most important function of mental hygiene is to prevent mental health problems by developing some programmes. |

The main aims are;

1. To make aware of the factors which are responsible for poor mental health are the hereditary factors, the constitutional factors or physiological factors and environmental factors.
2. To make aware of the various causes of maladjustment – personal as well as social.
3. To make aware of the personal needs, drives, motives, conflicts, frustrations, conflicts etc
4. To make aware of the ways and means of achieving emotional and social adjustment.
5. To make individuals aware of their potentialities and inner resources.
6. To make them aware that every individual is responsible for his own life and he has the right to make his own choice in life.
7. To make individuals aware to accept and take responsibility for their circumstances and be courageous enough to take whatever initiative is necessary to creatively work their way through or around the challenges.
8. To make individual aware that he is creative force of his life.
9. To help the individual to develop healthy human relationship and group interactions.
10. To help the individual to develop good leadership which is plural- is a team effort

**Constructive measures**

Not all people are mentally ill; rather of them possess sound mental health. The enormous increase of interest in the mental life of childhood is leading to the recognition at a much earlier period than formerly of those factors which endanger mental health. Education must be fundamentally altered to fit the needs of subnormal children and those with special difficulties of adaptation. So numerous and so disastrous are the results of failure to make the modifications in teaching which these children require that the whole educational system might well be examined with reference to their special needs. Constant and increasing efforts should be made to determine the individual requirements of school children and the attention of the best educators should be given to devising means for furnishing such children with equipment which will fit the individual child to live successfully, the average child being, for the moment, forgotten. Special classes exist now only for mentally defective children. They should be provided for all kinds of atypical children, intellectual defect representing only one and not perhaps the most important cause of imperfect mental adjustment.

**Curative measures**

The priority of mental health should be to prevent and sustain good mental health. But in reality we come across that life is not all that easy and people fall victim to mental illness and disorders. So mental hygiene aims to treat the mental diseases and disorders.

1. To give necessary knowledge regarding the types of mental illness, disorders and diseases.
2. To suggest various forms of therapy for the treatment and curing of specific mental illness and disorders.
3. To suggest the means for rehabilitation and readjustment of the maladjusted, mentally disturbed and mentally ill persons.

In this way, the ultimate aim of mental hygiene is, “to assist every individual in the attainment of fuller, happier, more harmonious and more effective existence”.

It seems essential that, notwithstanding the complexity of some of the questions involved, the prevention of mental diseases and mental deficiency should be considered in the general advance which is being made against all diseases, for it is very closely related to all the other fields of preventive medicine. Recent advances in the field of psychiatry have given grounds for encouragement, for if the outlook in some directions is not bright the accuracy with which the part played by certain causes is being defined promises much. The fact that it has been definitely determined that there are certain essential causes of mental disease and mental deficiency, and that some of these essential causes are entirely controllable, makes it imperative that preventive measures should be energetically promoted. At the same time the great advantages in the promotion of mental efficiency which may result from better understanding of the nature and importance of mental conflicts and of the means by which more successful adaptations may be made, should lead to developments in the constructive phases of mental hygiene which, in the end, may prove the greatest service to mankind of this branch of hygiene.